

Bathhouses of Hot Springs

Hot Springs National Park

Number 1, Summer 2006



Fordyce Bathhouse, Hot Springs National Park, Hot Springs, Arkansas. NPS Photo.



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www.nps.gov/hosp

Introduction:

For over 150 years, structures have been built near or over the thermal waters of Hot Springs, Arkansas. They accommodate the bathers who flocked to the area to take hot and cold water baths. Today, the ornate bathhouses of the early 20th century are the focal point in the national park and a draw for visitors all over the world!

Hot Springs National Park was established in 1832 as a **reservation** by the United States government to protect the thermal waters

that flowed from the base of Hot Springs Mountain. For many, these waters were, and are, viewed as having healing powers.

In 1921, the reservation was officially renamed Hot Springs National Park, the 18th unit in the new National Park Service system. However, because of its designation as a reservation in 1832, Hot Springs is sometimes considered America's first national park. Today, the day-to-day operations at Hot Springs National Park are overseen by a **superintendent** and park staff.

Grades 5-12

Arkansas History Curriculum Frameworks: PPE.2.1., PPE.2.2., PPE.2.4., PDC.1.1., PDC.1.4., SSPS.1.1., SSPS.1.2., SSPS.1.3., SSPS.1.4., TCC.2.2., TCC.2.3., PPE.1.1., PPE.2.2., PDC.1.3., SSPS.1.1., SSPS.1.2., SSPS.1.3., SSPS.1.4., SSPS.1.5., SSPS.1.6.

United States History Guidelines (NCSS): NSS-USH.5-12.1., NSS-USH.5-12.2., NSS-USH.5-12.3., NSS-USH.5-12.4., NSS-USH.5-12.6., NSS-USH.5-12.7., NSS-USH.9-12.10.

Arkansas Art Guidelines: A.1.12., A.1.14., A.1.17., A.2.11., A.3.10., A.3.15., A.3.17., A.3.18., A.1.21., A.1.24., A.1.25., A.1.26., A.1.28., A.2.19., A.3.19., A.3.21., A.3.22., A.3.25.

Language Arts: Demonstrates competence in general skills/strategies of writing, research, reading (literary, informational texts); writing expository compositions, adapt writing for different purposes (explanation, information, analyze, entertain, reflection, persuasion).

Technology: Knows the characteristics and uses of computer hardware and software and operating systems.

Objectives:

- Students will become aware of the economic, cultural, and environmental issues that make Hot Springs and their own communities unique.
- Students will practice and improve problem-solving skills.
- Students will collect, research, and record data that will organize thinking and enhance historical thinking about Hot Springs and their own communities.
- Students will be able to hypothesize what past life was like in Hot Springs and their communities.
- Students will be able to discuss the history and architecture of Hot Springs and their communities.
- By studying their own town, students will develop ownership in Hot Springs National Park and their communities.

Materials Needed:

Computer with Internet access and printer
Map of the United States (enclosed)
Map of Arkansas (enclosed)
Map of Hot Springs, Arkansas (enclosed)
National Park Service Quiz Sheet (enclosed)
Colored craft sticks (4 each)
Tacky glue
4" x 4" acetate or used laminating material
4" x 4" scrap paper
Pencils
Thin black permanent markers
Colored permanent markers
4" x 4" aluminum foil
6" ribbon
White glue (or hot glue)
Removable tape (less sticky transparent or masking tape)
Scissors
Razor knife (X-ACTO brand knife, #11 blade, or its equivalent)
Paper clips
Ruler
Construction paper and/or cardboards (if you can get them, "foam-core" boards are what many architects use).

Bathhouse Row in Hot Springs, Arkansas:

American Indians are believed to have been the first humans living and working in the Hot Springs area as early as the **Paleo-Indian** era (ca. 12,000 B.C) and into the 19th century historic period. Caddo, Quapaw, Choctaw, and other American Indian tribes used, or at least knew about, the various cold and hot springs located in the area. By 1818, the Quapaw were making use of the water in the area. These were just pools of water used for bathing and medical treatments.

While there is debate by historians about when the first Europeans came to use the hot springs, the first to extensively describe the waters in writing were **William Dunbar** and **George Hunter** in 1804. These explorers, hired by **President Thomas Jefferson** to explore the **Ouachita River** to these hot springs, noted that a few persons were living near the vicinity of the springs. They also gave one of the first details of a bathing spot, "We found at the Hot Springs an Open Log-Cabin and a few huts of split boards, all calculated for summer encampment, and which have been erected by persons resorting to the Springs for the recovery of their health" in temperatures of as much as 150° Fahrenheit. Thus, the first bathing spots were basically "dugout pools" with planks stretching across for seats. By 1818, a few cabins housed visitors, but the first hotel - a double log cabin - was not built until the early 1820s by Joseph Mellard (Millard). The accommodations at Hot Springs were not praiseworthy in the early 1800s, as noted by one visitor:

The accommodations for using the water are so entirely deficient that it would not be wonderful if but little was affected by them. The sweat house is rudely constructed with boards, which but partially exclude the air; and the mouth of it is stopped by a blanket. The patient has to come into the open air to dry himself, hurry on his clothes and go home.



Female bathers at the Corn Hole, ca. late 1860s. NPS Photo.

The first bathhouse was built in 1830 by Asa Thompson. This “true bathhouse” was a primitive log structure with a wooden tub near a sweat bath. Two years later, a second log bathhouse with more tubs was built near the present-day Arlington Lawn and Superior Bathhouse.

Bathhouses made of wood frame could be found in Hot Springs by the 1850s. These replaced the crude huts and were still operating well into the late 19th century. Wooden troughs carried water from the springs to a tank. The bather could then manipulate the cold and hot water by pulling a rope. Afterwards, the bather went to a special vapor room (a room over a thermal spring with cracks around two inches apart in the floor to allow vapor to rise). Following the vapor, the bather received a dousing of cold water before dressing. This was usually repeated several times a day.

Leading up to the 1870s, bathers used the bathhouses located on Hot Springs Creek at the foot of Hot Springs Mountain. The poor and indigent who could not afford the nicer bathhouses, had several alternatives, including the crude facilities

located at Corn Hole or the Pool of Siloam on Hot Springs Mountain. The latter were wooden structures or holes covered with canvas.

African-American bathers were segregated from the white bathhouses and used the Government Free Bathhouse until African American entrepreneurs built a bathhouse on Malvern Avenue, outside the Reservation, for African American use.



First government free bathhouse at Mud Hole, ca. mid-1800s. NPS Photo.

The construction of these bathhouses illustrated a gradual leaning towards the architecture of Spanish influence. For example, the second Arlington, which opened in 1893, featured characteristics of **Spanish Renaissance** architecture. The first Alhambra (1890) and Horseshoe (1888) featured



Promenade along Central Avenue, ca. early 20th century. NPS Photo.

Moorish details, including horseshoe window openings and an onion dome. They were considered bizarre and exotic – a late Victorian preference. It is still a mystery why the architects continually used Spanish characteristics for those buildings in the vicinity of Bathhouse Row, but it is known that this style was increasingly employed for elite architecture elsewhere in the U.S. in the early 20th century.

By 1891, all bathhouses erected within Hot Springs Reservation property had to be approved by the Secretary of the Interior and were required to be fireproof, if possible. Therefore, bathhouse owners had to seek unique characteristics to bring visitors to their sites. The federal government added drinking fountains and drinking niches, shrubbery, comfortable seats, bandstand pavilions, bronze eagles, etc., to catch a bather's eye. The bathhouse owners added additional types of treatments in order for their bathhouses to be considered “different,” including massages in the early 1900s and massages with exotic oils as at the Park Hotel bathhouse, electrotherapy, beauty parlors, and mechanotherapy. Even so, a number of clapboard-sided and board-and-batten-buildings could still be seen.

At the turn of the century, electric trolleys, telephone lines, and new stores across from Bathhouse Row tempted visitors. No new bathhouses were needed, according to the park superintendent, Martin Eisele. Therefore, Eisele put his energy into maintaining the bathing facilities and improving services. For example, all towels and robes were to be sterilized for guests, and bathhouses were to be fire resistant! By 1923, seven new bathhouses were standing on Bathhouse Row: the Buckstaff (opened, 1912), the Fordyce (1915), the Lamar (1923), the Maurice (1912), the Ozark (1922), the Quapaw (1922), and the Superior (1916). The Hale, built in 1892, was remodeled in 1914. Sometimes, for those whose leases had expired, like the Rammelsburg, the Palace and the Government Free Bathhouse, the buildings were torn down. Other times the leases were extended a few years longer. The new bathhouses often took the names of older bathhouses.

Bathhouse Row Activities: Construct a log cabin that might have been found at Hot Springs in the early 1800s by rolling newspaper, covering in paper mache' and painting.

Paper Mache' Recipe for Log Cabin:
Ingredients – one part flour, one part water. Method: Mix flour and water in a bowl until you get a smooth consistency. Allow to dry after finishing project.

Researching Your Architecture:
Every city has buildings, and their architecture reflects the value and culture of people. How a building is built and what it looks like provide important clues to when, where, and why it was built:

- o **Draw a map of the neighborhood, complete with legend.**

- o **Pick a building or bathhouse. Confirm who owns the building and the age of the building by using historical research.**

- o **Have students reflect on what life was like when the building was built. Write an article comparing and contrasting living styles from then and now.**

- o **Discuss different styles of architecture in class. Elaborate on clues students can look for to determine styles. Refer to the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program website at www.arkansaspreservation.org for an architectural style guide.**

- o **Discuss the history of Hot Springs or your community or visit the web site www.nps.gov/hosp or your community**

Vocabulary:

Arlington Hotel: hotel designed by Mann and Stern (also designers of several bathhouses). Constructed of buff brick, the central position is 11 stories with two splayed seven story wings. Also features domed towers with balconies and projecting two-story loggia. The Arlington Hotel is located north of the site of the first Arlington Hotel that was built in 1875. The second Arlington Hotel was built in 1892 and destroyed by a fire in 1923. The current hotel dates to 1924 and offers bathing facilities to its guests.

Central Avenue: main thoroughfare that runs in front of the Hot Springs National Park bathhouses.

Facade: face of a building, especially the principal face.

George Hunter: pharmacist and amateur scientist from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and later New Orleans, Louisiana. Born in Scotland, served in the Revolutionary War.

Hot Springs National Park: unit of the National Park Service. Sometimes considered the nation's first national park due to its inception in 1832 as a reservation. Protects and interprets the use of the thermal waters and the bathing industry in the United States. Located in the city of Hot Springs, Arkansas (Garland County).

National Register of Historic Places: the United States' official list of the country's most significant historic sites and structures. Administered by the National Park Service (see www.nps.gov/nr for more information).

Ouachita River: 605 mile-long river that runs through the states of Arkansas and Louisiana. The river served as a route into northern Louisiana and southwestern Arkansas for European colonists and has served as an important transportation and trade route since the 18th century. Explored by George Hunter and William Dunbar in 1804.

Paleo-Indian: of or relating to prehistoric human culture in the Western Hemisphere from the earliest habitation to around 8,500 B.C. Paleo-Indian cultures are distinguished especially by the various projectile points they produced.

Paterae: circular ornaments, each resembling a dish, often worked in relief on friezes, etc.

Pilaster: rectangular column with a capital and base, projecting only slightly from a wall as an ornamental motif.

President Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826): third President of the United States (1801–1809), author of the Declaration of Independence. Authorized William Dunbar and George Hunter to explore the Ouachita River to Hot Springs in 1804.

Spanish Renaissance Architecture/Spanish Colonial Revival: Spanish Renaissance/Colonial Revival architecture is a catalog of architectural styles unified by the use of arches, courtyards, form as mass, plain wall surfaces, and tile roofs -all derived from the Mediterranean world. Designers of these buildings were inspired by a number of sources, including the adobe and colonial buildings of Monterrey, California, late forms of Moorish architecture, medieval Spanish and Italian church architecture, baroque design of colonial Spain and Portugal, and southwest Hopi and Pueblo Indian adobes. This broad source base made it relatively easy to create a convincing harmony between the exterior image, interior space, decorative elements, and the building's function.



Stained Glass Window at the Maurice Bathhouse. NPS Photo.

Sources Used for this Lesson:

Arkansas Historical Quarterly

Bathhouse Row, National Register of Historic Places Nomination (copies can be obtained by contacting Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, 1500 Center Street, Little Rock, Arkansas 72201).

Beasley, Pamela, Trey Berry, and Jeanne Clements. *The Forgotten Expedition, 1804-1805: The Louisiana Purchase Journals of Dunbar and Hunter* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006).

Cultural Resources, National Park Service, www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/harrison/harrison2.htm

Paige, John C. and Laura S. Harrison. *Out of the Vapors: A Social and Architectural History of Bathhouse Row* (Hot Springs: National Park Service, 1987).

Shugart, Sharon. *The Hot Springs of Arkansas through the Years: A Chronology of Events*.

This lesson was prepared by Lea Flowers Baker, Education Specialist, Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site, Spring 2006.

Superintendent: person who heads the day-to-day operations of a National Park.

William Dunbar: planter, cotton merchant, and amateur scientist from Natchez, Mississippi. Born in Scotland. Leader of the Dunbar-Hunter Expedition.

Activities for Survey of Bathhouse Row:

Make a Stained Glass Window! Stained glass windows are found in several bathhouses at Hot Springs. Make your own by using the following instructions. Make sure your window reflects your family, interests, community, etc.:

1. Students select four craft sticks for their frame and glue them around a 4" by 4 1/2" piece of laminating material.
2. While the frames are drying, students sketch their designs on pre-cut pieces of used carbon paper. First, each student draws a simple design (candle, candy cane, stocking, bell, etc.) in the center of the paper. Then they divide the space around the design by drawing lines to each corner and each side of the paper.
3. The paper is carefully placed under laminating material, and the drawing is traced with a thin permanent black marker.
4. The frame is turned over, and students color their designs with permanent colored markers. Why color on the back? It prevents the black outlines from smearing or disappearing.
5. To make the finished designs, glitter, pieces of aluminum foil, etc. are glued to the back of each design.
6. Satin ribbon is glued to the top of each frame so the design can be hung on a tree, a doorknob, or in a window.

Construct a scale model of a bathhouse in Hot Springs National Park. Place them on exhibit for the school to view. Make sure that labels are included that tell about the bathhouse, date it was built, and architectural features. You may use your computer and create GIS models, as well.

Historic Bathhouses of Hot Springs



* 1912 Neoclassical revival architecture

* Cream colored brick walls with white stucco finish at the base.

* Three stories

* Men and women's facilities, common space for reading and writing rooms, rooftop sun porches.

* Only bathhouse on the row that never closed.

Buckstaff Bathhouse (NPS Photo)

* 1914/1915 Renaissance revival architecture with Spanish and Italian elements.

* Three story construction with terra cotta detailing.

* Lobby with terra cotta fountains, stained glass, and ceramic tile flooring.

* Men and women's facilities, cooling rooms, DeSoto Fountain in men's hall, gymnasium, assembly room, bowling alley.

* Remodeled between 1930 and 1940.

* Closed as bathhouse in 1962 and reopened as Visitor Center for Hot Springs National Park in 1989 after three-year rehabilitation and renovation.



Fordyce Bathhouse (NPS Photo)



Hale Bathhouse (NPS Photo)

* 1892/1893 construction (replaced earlier Hale Bathhouse) with renovation in 1939.

* Facade is Mission revival architecture (circa 1939).

* Two and one-half stories with rectangular floor plan.

* Hipped roof of red tile, stucco over brick walls.

* Lobby, office, men's dressing room, pack, cooling, and massage rooms, display spring.

* Ceased operation as bathhouse in 1978.

* 1923 Classical revival architecture.

* One-story sun porch spans length of front.

* Features murals of architectural and country scenes.

* Cooling rooms, bath halls, men and women's facilities.

* Skylight in center of building, writing and dressing rooms, gymnasium.

* Bathhouse closed in 1985.



Lamar Bathhouse (NPS Photo)

* 1911/1915 (remodeled) building in Renaissance revival and Mediterranean architecture.

* Square design, three stories tall with 79 rooms.

* Brick and concrete covered with stucco on exterior.

* Bay windows, sun porch, skylight, flat roof with green tile, skylight of mythical sea scenes in men and women's bath halls.

* Billiard, staff, and dressing rooms, gymnasium, therapeutic pool, and 1915 Roycroft Den with inglenook fireplace and dark panelling.

* Closed in 1974.



Maurice Bathhouse (NPS Photo)



Ozark Bathhouse (NPS Photo)

* 1922 Spanish colonial revival architecture with brick and concrete with stucco.

* Trapezoidal floor plan, two stories, 37 rooms.

* Twin towers with enclosed sun porch.

* Sloped roof with red clay tile.

* Skylight over porch, marble counters.

* Closed in 1977.



Superior Bathhouse (NPS Photo)

* 1916 building in Classical revival architecture (replaced earlier Superior Bathhouse).

* Two stories, 23 rooms, and L-shaped floor plan.

* Brick and reinforced concrete, black tile medallions.

* Sun porch, lobby, men and women's bath facilities, lounge, massage, and dressing rooms.

* Marble bath stalls, tile floors, and solid porcelain tubs.

* Walls of painted plaster, marble, and tile.

* Whirlpool equipment.

* Remodeled several times between 1930s and 2006.

* Closed as bathhouse in 1983.

* 1922 structure in Spanish colonial revival architecture.

* Central dome covered with colored tile and copper cupola.

* One story, u-shaped floor plan.

* Carved American Indian head above doorway with scalloped shells and spiny sculpin fish at north and south ends of building.

* Bathing facilities, sun porch, common rooms, beauty parlors, and laundry.

* Closed in 1984.



Quapaw Bathhouse (NPS Photo)



Administration Building (NPS Photo)

- * 1936 building in Spanish colonial revival architecture.
- * Two-stories, Spanish baroque doorway, wrought iron grilles on the window, French doors to wrought iron balconies.
- * Hip roof covered in clay tile.
- * From 1936 to 1989, downstairs served as Visitor Center and museum for Hot Springs National Park.

- * Initial construction, 1933 to 1942, completed in 1958.
- * North-south direction on hillside behind bathhouses.
- * Remodeled and worked on since 1984.



Grand Promenade (NPS Photo)



Formal Entrance (NPS Photo)

- * Located between Maurice and Fordyce bathhouses at center of Bath-house Row.
- * Federal bronze eagles on limestone pillars stand guard over old formal carriage entrance, balustrade made of limestone ashlar masonry and concrete.
- * Contains drinking fountain and leads to Grand Promenade.



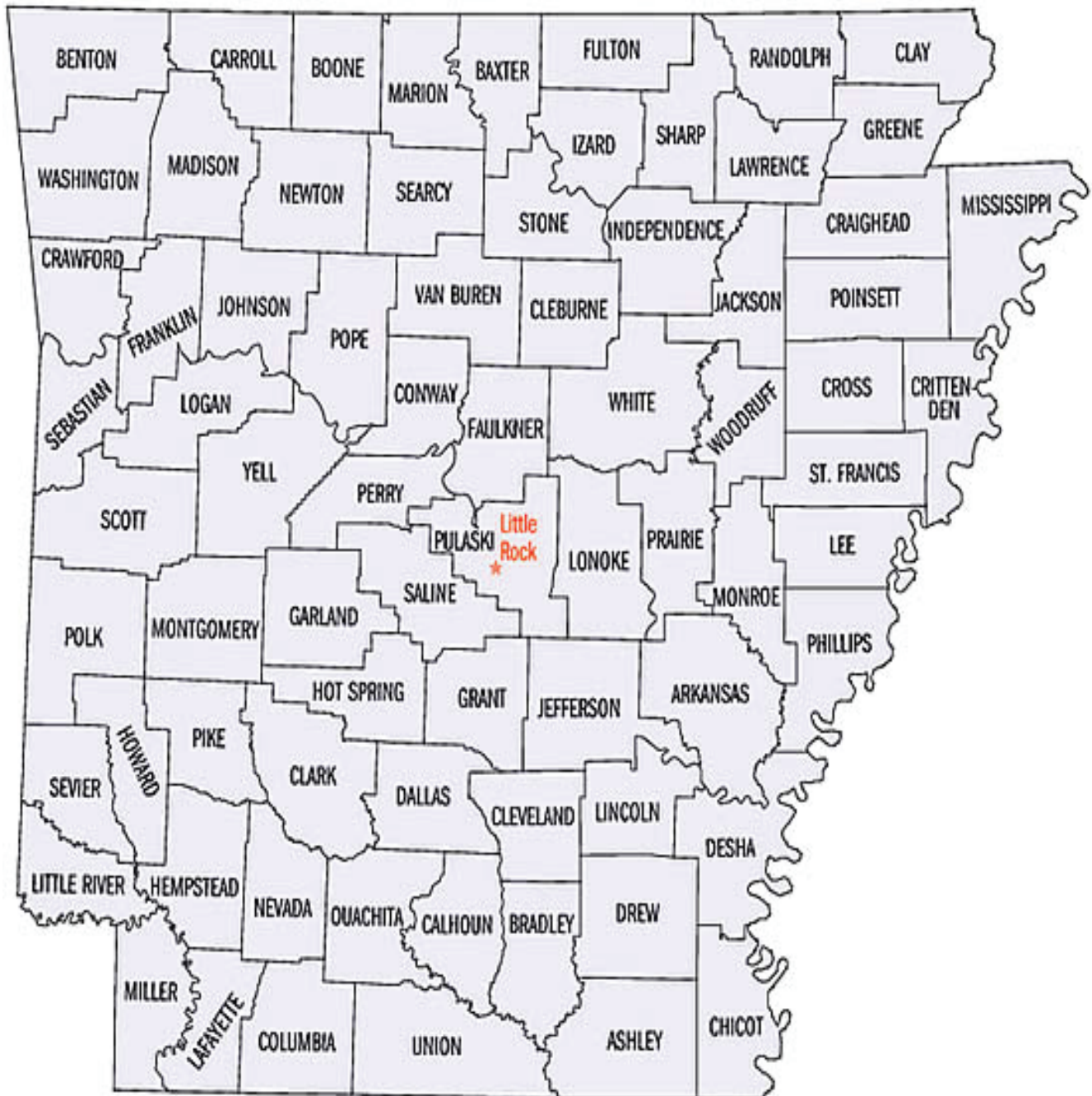
These are a few of the fountains in Hot Springs National Park:

- * Noble Fountain in front of Administration Building (top row, left).
- * Dripping Springs Fountain (top row, right). This fountain was completed in 1903.
- * Formal Entrance on Bathhouse Row between the Fordyce and Maurice Bathhouses (second row, left).
- * Fountain at Formal Entrance on Bathhouse Row near the Maurice Bathhouse (second row, right).

Map of the United States



Map of Arkansas



Map of Hot Springs

